

Early July '93 / Southtown Economist

# Company wants to expand Southeast Side waste plant

By Robert Bergsveik  
Staff Writer

A Massachusetts-based company is seeking permits to expand its waste treatment operations at a Southeast Side plant. Clean Harbors of Chicago plans to build a 3,500-square-foot plant at which it would treat in-

dustrial wastes to prepare them for disposal. The company also wants to expand an operation in which it blends wastes into industrial fuels.

The proposal has drawn the ire of a Southeast Side environmen-

talist who vowed to oppose the plan at a public hearing next month.

"We don't want any more wastes in the area," said Marian Byrnes, chairman of the Southeast Side Environmental Task Force.

Four years ago, Clean Harbors bought the former Chem-Clear

plant at 11800 S. Stony Island Ave., Vice President William Geary said. About 90 percent of the facility's operations involve treatment of 30 types of liquid industrial wastes, he said.

The company has applied to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to build the new plant to treat 10 more types of in-

dustrial waste, including electroplating chemicals, he said. Clean Harbors' permit application also seeks approval to expand its storage to 1,700 chemical drums from 1,200, and to install a cement kiln to expand its fuel-blending capacity, he said.

The plant's treatment capacity, however, would remain capped at 60 people, would add 30 to 40 new workers as part of the expansion, Geary said.

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Fri. Oct. 8 - Berrylee Farms - \$35. Lv. 9:30 - R. 5. Musical/luncheon/Apple picking and coach bus.

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The St. John Church, 1847 Lincoln Avenue, Whiting, will serve a lake perch fish dinner on Friday, June 25th from 3:30 - 7 p.m. In the St. John Panol Room. Homemade pierogi, our specialty, will also be served. Fish dinner is \$7; pierogi are \$1.50 per dozen. Carry outs are available, 219-659-3041.

## Clean Harbors Seeks 6/24/93 Expansion

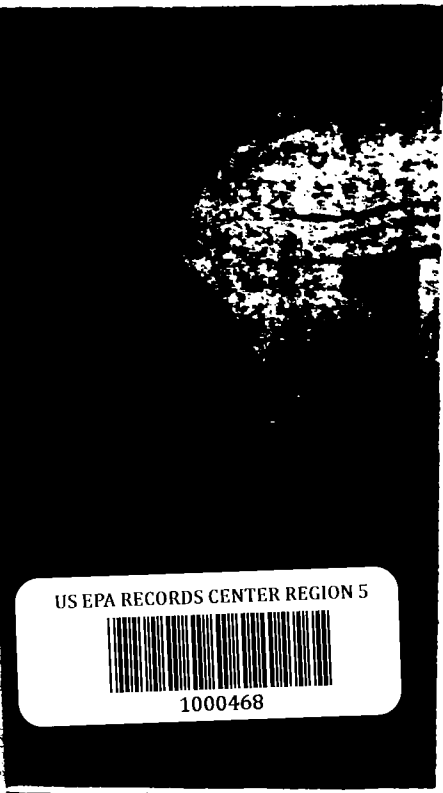
By JANE HOPKINS

CHICAGO - Clean Harbors of Chicago has filed for permits to allow expansion of its hazardous waste water treatment plant on Lake Calumet.

The facility at 11800 S. Stony Island, built by ChemClear in

1983, was bought by Clean Harbors in 1989. The Massachusetts based environmental services company operates this and other waste water treatment plants across the country and in Puerto Rico.

See Harbors pg. 8



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## Harbors firm. frnt. pg.

The Lake Calumet facility treats 20 million gallons of hazardous waste water a year from several hundred industrial customers, mostly in the Chicago metropolitan area.

"Virtually all industry creates waste water," said assistant plant manager Clay Johnson.

Jim Laubsted, facilities compliance manager, said Clean Harbors of Chicago treats waste from food processors, mills, chemical companies, plastics and hygiene products manufacturers and other sources.

Only large industries can afford the equipment needed to treat their own waste water. Most companies produce less than 10,000 gallons a day. Clean Harbors provides these industries with the service of disposing of their hazardous waste water.

Most of the contaminated water comes to the facility in tanker trucks, although some smaller producers may only need a barrel of two treated. Clean Harbors can also serve these needs.

The Lake Calumet facility is designed primarily to remove heavy metals -- lead, mercury, chromium, arsenic, etc. -- through chemical treatment of the waste water.

Once removed, the contaminants end up in a clay-like "cake". Because of the chemical treatment they undergo at the plant, the heavy metals in the cake are stable and cannot leech back into the environment. The cake is transported to a special waste landfill in Livingston, Illinois for disposal.

Laubsted said they use that landfill because it is one of the safest around; designed with extra precaution to prevent hazardous materials from leeching into the soil or groundwater.

Environmental law puts liability on every party that ever handles the hazardous products, all the way

back to the producer. For their own protection and for the sake of their customers, Clean Harbors does all it can to be sure the waste is properly handled after it leaves their plant, Laubsted said.

The detoxified water is discharged to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, which monitors Clean Harbors discharge daily.

Of the 20 million gallons of hazardous waste water arriving at the plant each year, 92 to 93 percent ends up going down the sewer, Laubsted said. About 10,000 tons of solid waste gets landfilled from the facility each year.

The Clean Harbors Chicago plant does not treat for organic contaminants (like petroleum or solvents). Small amounts of such contaminants are extracted in their processes. These are filtered out, barreled and sealed. They end up as hazardous wastes -- less than 1,000 gallons a year from the plant -- that go to industrial users licensed to burn them as fuel.

Neither do they treat for PCB's. Any sample containing these highly toxic, non-degrading chemicals is rejected and must be treated elsewhere, Laubsted said.

Each waste product must be screened before it is accepted at Clean Harbors. Chemists use computerized equipment to check the samples for levels of different contaminants measured in parts per billion.

"Every sample, every truck, every barrel gets a bar-code," said Laubsted. They are read like a grocery store scanner and allow the product to be traced all the way through the system.

Chemists monitor the treatment throughout the process to be sure the toxins are removed from the water.

"We're not an incinerator. We're not a landfill. We're not pumping stuff into the air," said Laubsted. Some of the processes produce gases, but they are scrubbed or filtered before being released.

"We are well under the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) air emission limits," Laubsted said.

waste water depends on what is in it and how much there is. Clay Johnson estimated \$125 as an average price to process each of the drums they receive.

Clean Harbors, and other environmental service companies like it, operate under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) which took effect in 1980.

"Before 1980, this stuff could go down the sewer," said Laubsted. The effect of the heavy metals and other contaminants in the environment was "very bad", he said. Laubsted credits RCRA for the much improved condition of the Great Lakes.

But each type of toxin in the water takes a different kind of treatment.

"Prior to RCRA everybody mixed everything together." Now industry tries to keep different contaminants separate to reduce the cost of treating them.

That is also the case with Clean Harbors itself. Under RCRA, certain industrial processes are listed as hazardous waste producers. While they produce the same type of waste as Clean Harbors presently treats as "characteristic" waste, it costs more to dispose of the end product because it comes from a "listed" source.

"A listed waste stays listed even after it is treated," explained George Hamper of the U.S. EPA. "A 'characteristic' waste (determined to be hazardous, but not on the list) can be disposed of if it is treated to be proven safe."

"It's not very scientific," admits Hamper, "but on the other hand, it works pretty well." He said the system was put in place as a way to start enforcing RCRA. "It's only existed since 1980. It's still maturing."

Listed industrial processes include electroplating, steel pickling, and coke plants. For Clean Harbors, serves these customers at their plants, all the solid waste produced would need more expensive disposal.

For that reason, Clean Harbors wants to expand and build a second treatment facility on its present site to do the same kind of chemical treatment for these listed industry waste waters.



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staff into the air," said Laubsted. Some of the processes produce gases, but they are scrubbed or filtered before being released.

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In addition to the treatment plant, the Clean Harbors site stores 55-gallon drums of hazardous waste of various classifications. These are mixed in with larger batches for treatment or combined with like samples and shipped out to another handler.

The cost of treating hazardous

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For that reason, Clean Harbors wants to expand and build a second treatment facility on its present site to do the kind of chemical treatment for these listed industry waste systems.

The expansion would also add more storage space for drums, allowing them to accept more waste to make like, bulk loads more efficiently, Johnson said. Clean Harbors would add rail service to and from the plant via Norfolk & Southern which runs adjacent to the site.

The expansion would mean an additional 10 to 15 jobs at the plant, currently employing 53 workers, Johnson said.

The Illinois EPA will hold public hearings on Clean Harbors' permit application on July 15 at 7 p.m. at Olive Harvey College Theater, 1001 S. Woodlawn.

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